

The next section of the book deals with the tremendous importance of "creeds"—in a totally non-religious sense—and more especially when spread over a dozen or more generations. The ancestor worship of China and the chances of the development of a eugenic creed demonstrate the compass of a chapter which is both fundamental to the author's history-in-advance and penetrating in its consideration of social effort. "Actually all too often philanthropic effort goes in exactly the opposite direction, into curing the faults of the worst, without recognizing that the acquired characters so induced are quite impermanent."

The next section on "Man—a Wild Animal" is, to the reviewer, the least convincing part of the book. The thesis is that man, being wild, and wildness being related to his passion for freedom (which in fact is perhaps after all not a very widespread human attribute), is not malleable genetically. The contrast between wild and tame, and the genetic outcome of the antithesis, is perhaps overdrawn. The author may live too much in the realms of black and white where gentle grey is absent. "There may be those who will regret that man will not attain these pinnacles of specialization, but the failure is inevitable. In order to create such specialist breeds there would have to be a master breed at the summit, and this would be a totally different kind of thing from all the other breeds, because it would have to create itself." Is the author here, perhaps, a little bit forgetful of the potentialities, which he has already discussed, of creeds spread over generations?

Next comes a wide discussion of the limitation of populations, and the problem of the consciously limited population in competition with the freely breeding who expand to the precise limits of local, maybe temporary, supplies, and the relationships between numbers and material standards. "I have already suggested that the voluntary limitation of populations is an unstable process, whereas any process that is to come about spontaneously has simply got to be a stable process." If "there was a single one" (i.e. race) "that resisted the bribe of

the motor-car, that race would people the earth, and this it would do whether its motive was high principle, or some creed, or simply pure stupidity. It is in this sense that I say that the avoidance of the Malthusian threat of over-population is bound to be an unstable process." The author sees no evidence to suggest that there could ever be general world control of populations by agreement. And in any event if there were a general period of limitation there would be an expectable natural selection in favour of progenitiveness and so limitation itself would soon be defeated.

To the convinced eugenicist—and this book will undoubtedly make him review the basis of his conviction—the most that the author will allow in optimism is to point out that "any country that could devise a method whereby the promoted were strongly encouraged to have more children than the rest, would find itself soon excelling in the world." Add to this "a creed . . . which inculcated in those who were promoted the duty of having more children than their fellows, as an act benefiting the human race. The prospect of such a creed arising does not seem very hopeful, but if by its means any country can even partly solve the problems, it will lead the world, and it will be doing so through the method of 'Unconscious Selection'."

This is a book to be bought and pondered by eugenicists, not only to be read in review and borrowed from the library.

G. C. L. BERTRAM.

BIOGRAPHY

Raverat, Gwen. *Period Piece: A Cambridge Childhood*. London, 1952. Faber. Pp. 282. Price 21s.

THIS is a most delightful book—though with sad and even tragic passages, of course, for Gwen Raverat, *née* Darwin, is frank and honest well above the average, though I do not remember her as quite so peculiar a girl as she makes herself out to have been. Doubtless she learned to conceal it from mere acquaintances. Nor does she seem to have discovered that even quite ordinary people

hated clothes because of their discomfort and humiliating nature, nor to have been made to suffer from veils, that final horror of trying to be smart.

The book is illustrated by her own entrancing drawings, which are as witty as her writing, with all the characters plainly recognizable. The Darwin family has always seemed to me a supreme eugenic exhibit, producing outstanding talent and character amounting to genius, generation after generation. And, moreover, sending through its women, shoots of not only remarkable scientific but also artistic, musical and literary ability into other families. One of the things to be grateful for in this book is the proof, notably from the portraits of the aunts, that Darwin women also have strong and eccentric characters, so that if only they and their brothers will continue to choose their mates wisely and have large enough families, they may succeed for ever in leavening the British loaf. But even Darwins have their limitations. Of "the five uncles," one of whom was her father, she says that they showed "a sort of innocent lack of imagination . . . They were quite unable to understand the minds of the poor, the wicked, or the religious."

The Darwin family seems to be born with an eugenic conscience, which in Aunt Etty, a delightful person, took the form of altering the books she read, so entrancingly, to the children. For example, in the case of Don John where "in the cause of the truth that moral tendencies are inherited like other characteristics, she changed the entire sense of the book, so that the good boy should be descended from the good parents and the bad from the bad." It will be noticed that Darwins are essentially exclusive, so that those who "inadvertently marry" into the family are sometimes obliged to band themselves together in defensive alliance. We should therefore be gratified by such an intimate glimpse of such a remarkable group of people and be glad that they were also ahead of their time in the humane way in which they brought up their children, greatly aided in the case of our author by the complete fearlessness

and charm of her mother—from across the Atlantic. Whether her father's choice was partly, if unconsciously, actuated by a feeling of resistance against the family habit of cousin-marriage, it certainly had eugenic consequences for which we cannot be too grateful.

URSULA GRANT DUFF.

VITAL STATISTICS

World Health Organization. *Annual Epidemiological and Vital Statistics, 1947-1949. Part I, Vital Statistics and Causes of Death.* Geneva, 1952. Pp. 746. Price 70s. Bilingual publication: English and French.

World Health Organization. *Comparability of statistics of causes of death according to the fifth and sixth revisions of the International List.* Geneva, 1952. Pp. 59. Price 2s. 9d.

THE first of these two publications continues the compilation of international vital statistics, those for 1939-46 having already been set out in a previous volume. The material, gathered from national and municipal statistics supplemented by questionnaire, covers:

- (a) the areas of various countries, their populations and those of selected large cities according to the most recent censuses;
- (b) vital statistics for each year from 1946 to 1949, with mean figures for 1936-38 for comparison;
- (c) deaths by sex and age for each year from 1946 to 1949; mortality rates for some infectious diseases, bronchopneumonia, diarrhoea and enteritis at ages under two years, in selected large towns; deaths of children under five for selected causes by age and sex;
- (d) extracts from the most recent life tables.

The volume serves several useful purposes, bringing together, as it does, a vast amount of material which would otherwise have to be sought at great length in national publications, and giving a picture of national trends in vital statistics (well brought out for some